



Arizona Game and Fish Department

# Community Fishing Program

Vision for 2015-2025







**The Community  
Fishing Motto is:**

*If the people  
can't get to the fish,  
we'll bring the fish  
to the people.*



# Executive Summary

The Community Fishing concept has been implemented in several different states.

Although the models differ slightly by locations, the underlying concept is to provide fishing opportunities for anglers in urban environments. The most successful programs have been built upon collaborative partnerships in which each/all entities have investments into the program including financial, property, community improvements, etc. Because urban areas continue to expand in size and population throughout Arizona, and new waters outside of urban areas are limited, **the CFP represents the best opportunity for the Department to initiate new fishing opportunities throughout Arizona AND recruit new customers directly from the diverse communities in which they reside.** There are eight Objectives in this vision for the CFP to expand over the next 10 years. Expansion will cost additional money, but there are several reasons the investments will pay dividends to the Department, including but not limited to:

- *The CFP has a proven business model & has successfully increased the number of anglers into the program;*
- *Arizona's CFP is the largest of its kind in the United States, & this model has been implemented in other states with great success;*
- *The CFP is engaged in the very communities that are reflective of Arizona's growing populations;*
- *CFP is versatile & can be implemented within neighborhoods across the entire state, not like hunting or other outdoor wildlife-related activities that require most people to leave city limits;*
- *The CFP builds partnerships with the municipalities & communities so there is a mutual investment & interest in having the program succeed;*
- *The CFP has a suite of other potential lines of business & activities that could be employed at CFP parks & waters to raise enough program revenue to restore cost neutrality or make a profit;*
- *The CFP compliments many other existing features & activities at parks such as wildlife watching;*
- *The CFP is intrinsically linked with Sportfish Education that will use CFP waters to conduct dozens of fishing clinics & events annually.*
- *New waters can be created within communities, while rural waters are fixed in number.*

# Background: 1983-Present

The Department's broad Vision **for the CFP is to ensure that anglers in ALL incorporated communities within Arizona have opportunities to go fishing within five miles of home.** Many communities in Arizona don't have public waters established within or immediately adjacent to municipal boundaries, but as the program grows, the Department can work with communities to provide guidance to establish community waters that can be used for fishing.

The CFP has one core goal: **By 2025, grow the CFP to accommodate 200,000 anglers by providing close-to-home (within five miles) fishing opportunities in at least 36 of the 91 incorporated communities across the state of Arizona.** As the CFP grows, the Department will reach new people in new areas in its quest to increase statewide recruitment of anglers.

The Community Fishing Program (CFP) was started in 1983 as a partnership between the Department and a few municipalities, and officially became the Urban Fishing Program in 1985. It was designed to be a user pay – user benefit model, and partnerships with municipalities combined with Urban Fishing License revenue allowed the program to be self-sustaining. The program motto has remained consistent as “If people can't get to the fish, we'll bring the fish to the people”.





The CFP added waters periodically through the years, all of which fell into the “intensively-stocked” model upon which the program was developed. In 2005 the Urban Fishing Program was given the Pioneer Award for Quality by the Arizona Quality Alliance. In 2007 the Program received the Showcase in Excellence Award by the Arizona Quality Alliance for its commitment to quality process and improvements. Hence, the model for the CFP works because it has been recognized by customers, partners, and stakeholders, tested, and has been the source for benchmarking Programs in other states.

By 2008 CFP reached a peak of 21 waters. In approximately 2009 the Department began to look at the CFP strategically different by preparing plans, obtaining stocking approvals, and developing strategies to continue expanding urban fishing opportunities to more anglers at more locations.

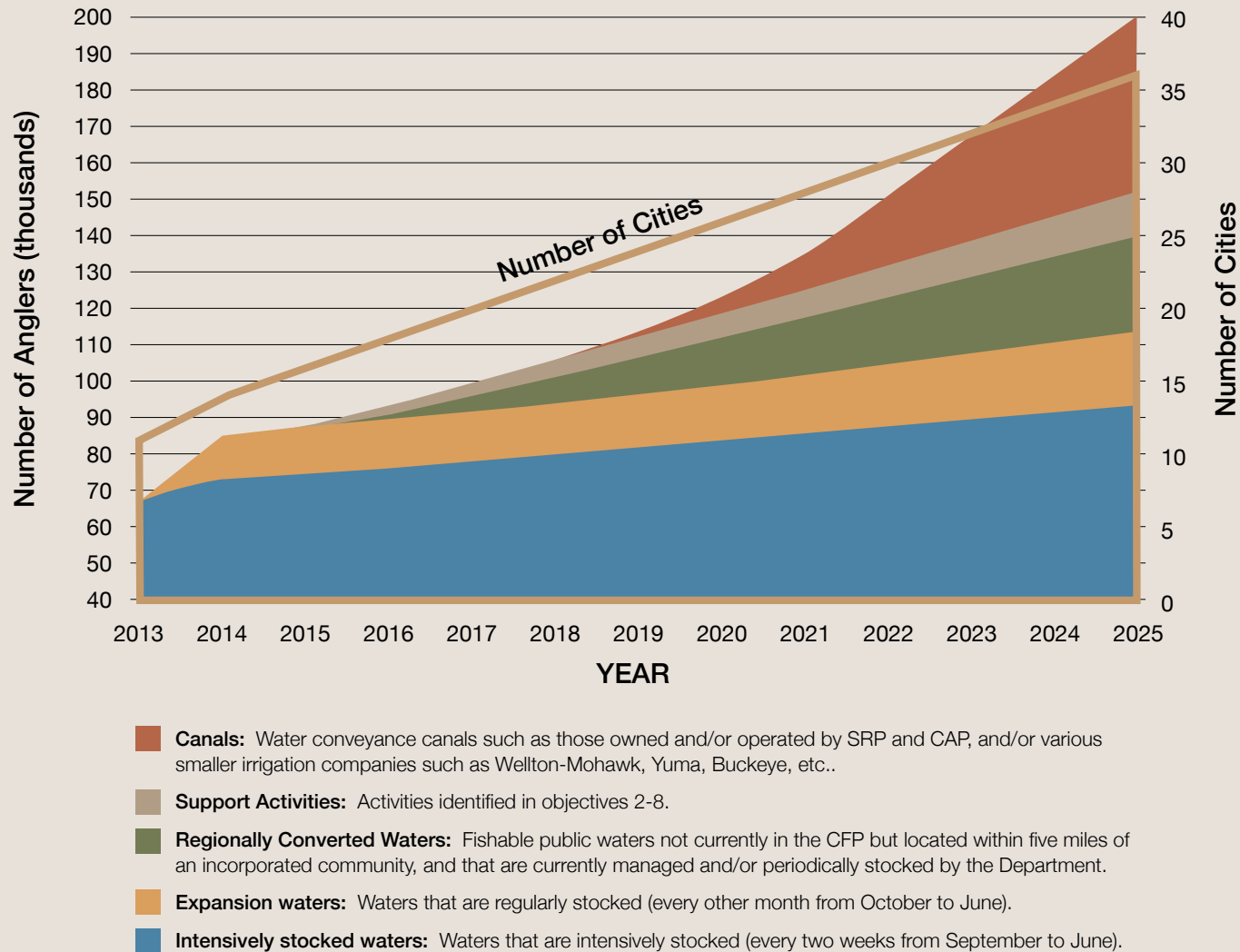
Expansion was predicated on information from numerous nationwide studies that came to similar conclusions: to attract new anglers and retain existing anglers, game and fish agencies must find ways to make quality fishing experiences more convenient to more people. Most anglers live in urban areas, and with most communities expanding throughout the state, demand for regionally-managed waters has increased as well. Thus, close-by fishing opportunities and access in urban and suburban areas must be provided, promoted and developed to keep pace.

In January 2014 the program was officially rebranded, which included a new name (Community Fishing Program) a new brand logo, and artwork for the signs and Guidebook. At the same time the CFP expanded from 21 to 36 waters while Department licensing was also restructured and simplified. This was one of several components in changing the program while it continues to grow.





## Getting to 200k Anglers in 36 Municipalities



**Figure 1.** Depicts anticipated growth of CFP from 2015-2025. This shall be accomplished through an aggressive campaign to add waters in at least two cities per year. Specific locations are yet to be determined, but communities that have existing waters will be targeted first.



# Vision, Goal, Objectives and Strategies for CFP 2015-2025

The Community Fishing Program is a component of the Department's Statewide Fisheries Program. Over-arching program direction is identified in the Department's Strategic Plan (Wildlife 20/20) and details are further refined in subsequent Key Measures, Operational and Implementation Plans.

The vision of the community fishing program is to ensure that anglers in all incorporated communities within Arizona have opportunities to go fishing within five miles of home. The core goal is by 2025, to grow the CFP to accommodate 200,000 anglers by providing close-to-home (within five miles) fishing opportunities in at least 36 of the 91 incorporated communities across the state of Arizona. Achieving this core goal will require significant growth of the program to new areas in the State, financial and logistical resources, reaching new and diverse groups of anglers, and obviously more fish. In addition, we wish to see an increase in Community Pride by improving the status and use of CFP waters by parks/recreation departments, community leaders, commercial vendors, and private angling groups. The following are objectives and strategies to reach the goal of growing CFP to reach 36 Arizona communities by 2025.

**Vision:** To ensure that anglers in all incorporated communities within Arizona have opportunities to go fishing within five miles of home.

**Core Goal:** By 2025, grow the CFP to accommodate 200,000 anglers by providing close-to-home (within five miles) fishing opportunities in at least 36 of the 91 incorporated communities across the state of Arizona.



## OBJECTIVE

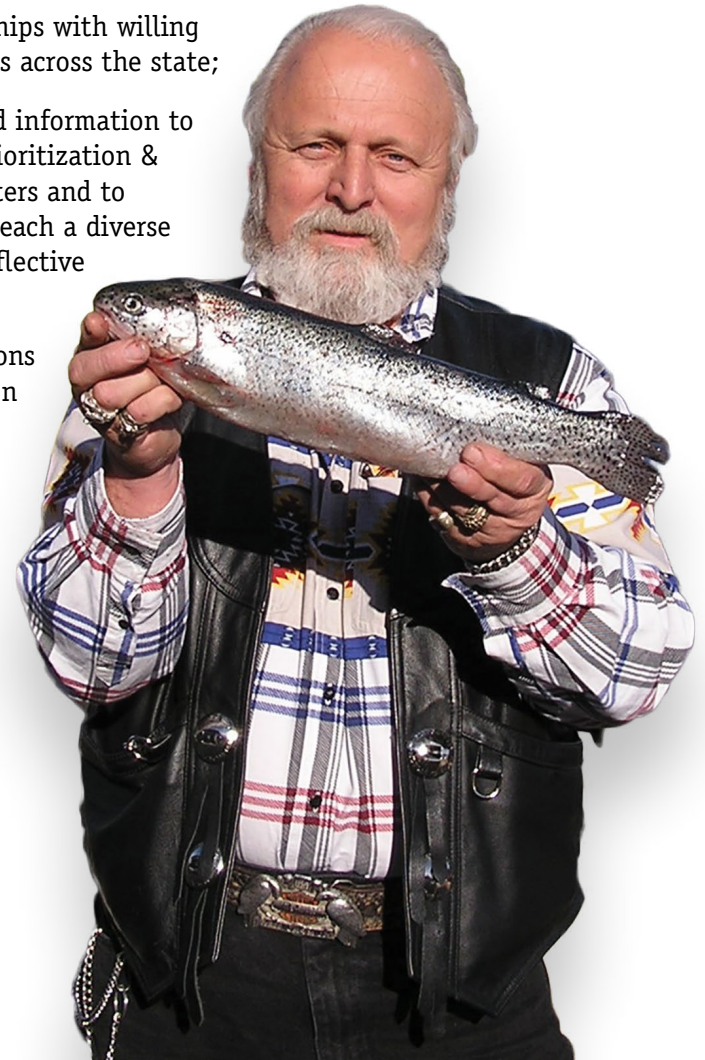
## 1

**Expand CFP waters within Arizona communities to ensure anglers have opportunities to fish within five miles of home.**

In the 2010 Creel survey, median distance traveled by CFP anglers was five miles. Further analysis revealed that 32% of CFP anglers traveled between one and three miles to fish, and another 26% of anglers traveled between four and six miles. Thus, 58% of CFP anglers traveled six or fewer miles to go fishing. This information can be used to determine optimal locations for new CFP waters within communities. In addition, CFP will expand into new non-traditional areas such as homeowners associations, golf courses, and large water conveyance canals.

## STRATEGIC APPROACHES:

- 1) The CFP will focus on locations that impact the largest populations as highest priority.
  - a) Target all existing public waters in all Arizona's communities;
  - b) Where feasible and permitted, expand CFP into large conveyance canals such as SRP in Phoenix and Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District in Yuma;
  - c) Expand CFP via partnerships with willing Homeowners Associations across the state;
  - d) Utilize current GIS-based information to actively assess in the prioritization & selection process for waters and to ensure that CFP waters reach a diverse customer base that is reflective of Arizona's population.
- 2) Evaluate our current locations & identify where duplication occurs in meeting this objective.
  - a) Determine where cuts or reallocations to the CFP could occur without impacting the program to a large extent.





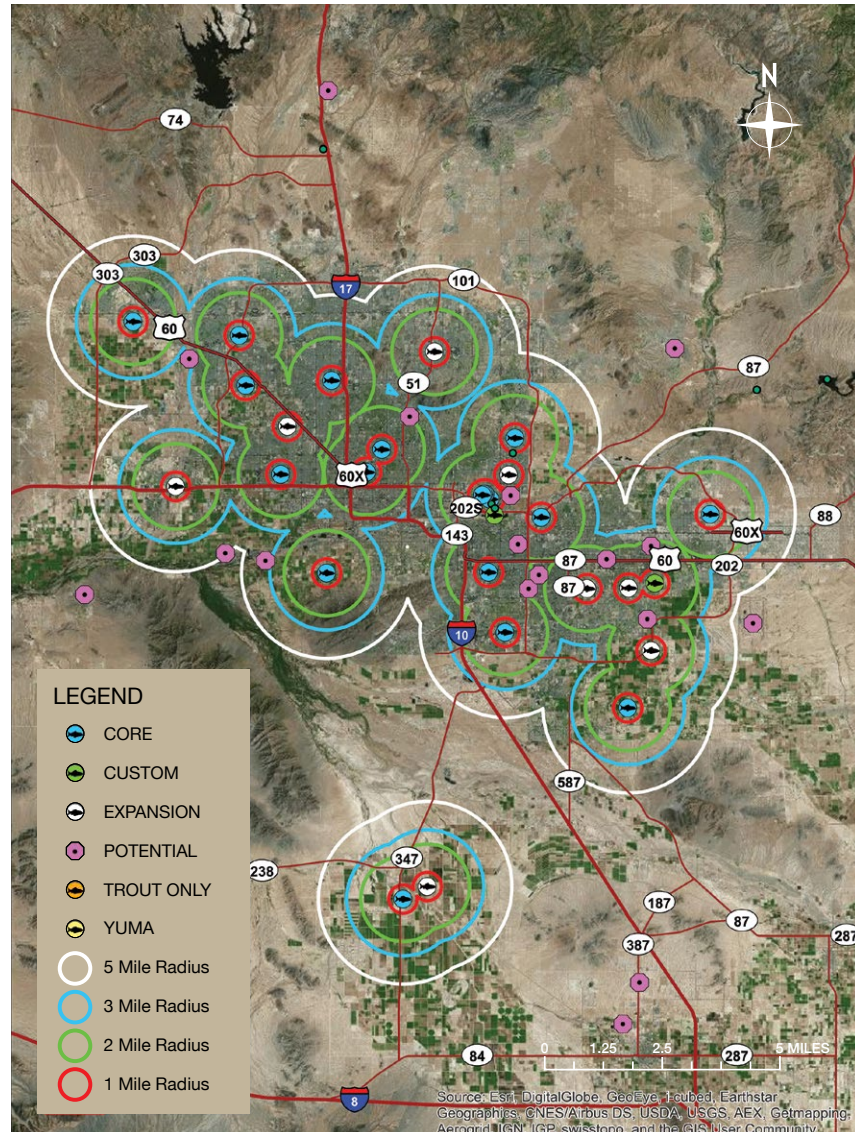
## Cities where the CFP is currently established.

NAME	TYPE	COUNTY	POPULATION 2010
Somerton	City	Yuma	14,287
Payson	Town	Gila	15,301
Sahuarita	Town	Pima	25,259
Maricopa	City	Pinal	43,482
Avondale	City	Maricopa	76,238
Yuma	City	Yuma	93,064
Surprise	City	Maricopa	117,517
Peoria	City	Maricopa	154,065
Tempe	City	Maricopa	161,719
Gilbert	Town	Maricopa	208,453
Scottsdale	City	Maricopa	217,385
Glendale	City	Maricopa	226,721
Chandler	City	Maricopa	236,123
Mesa	City	Maricopa	439,041
Tucson	City	Pima	520,116
Phoenix	City	Maricopa	1,445,632

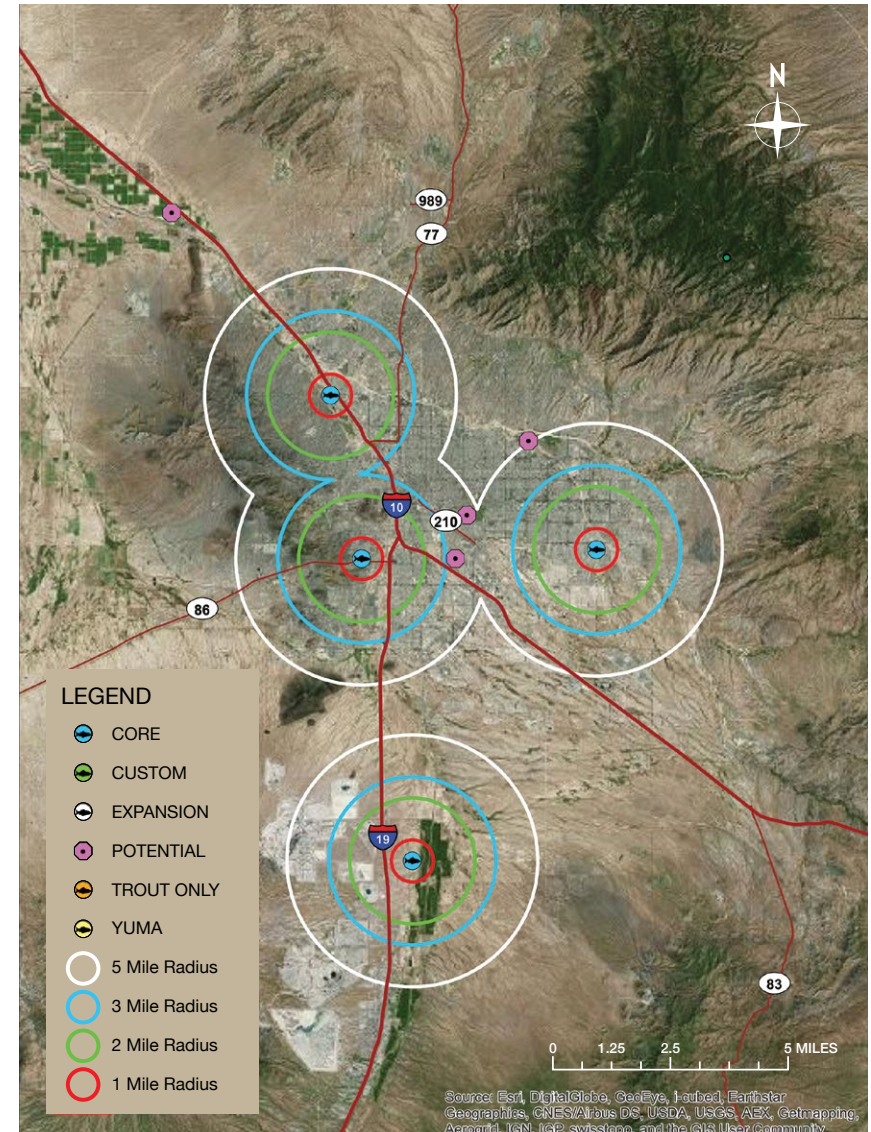
Source: Census population 2010



# Stocking Locations

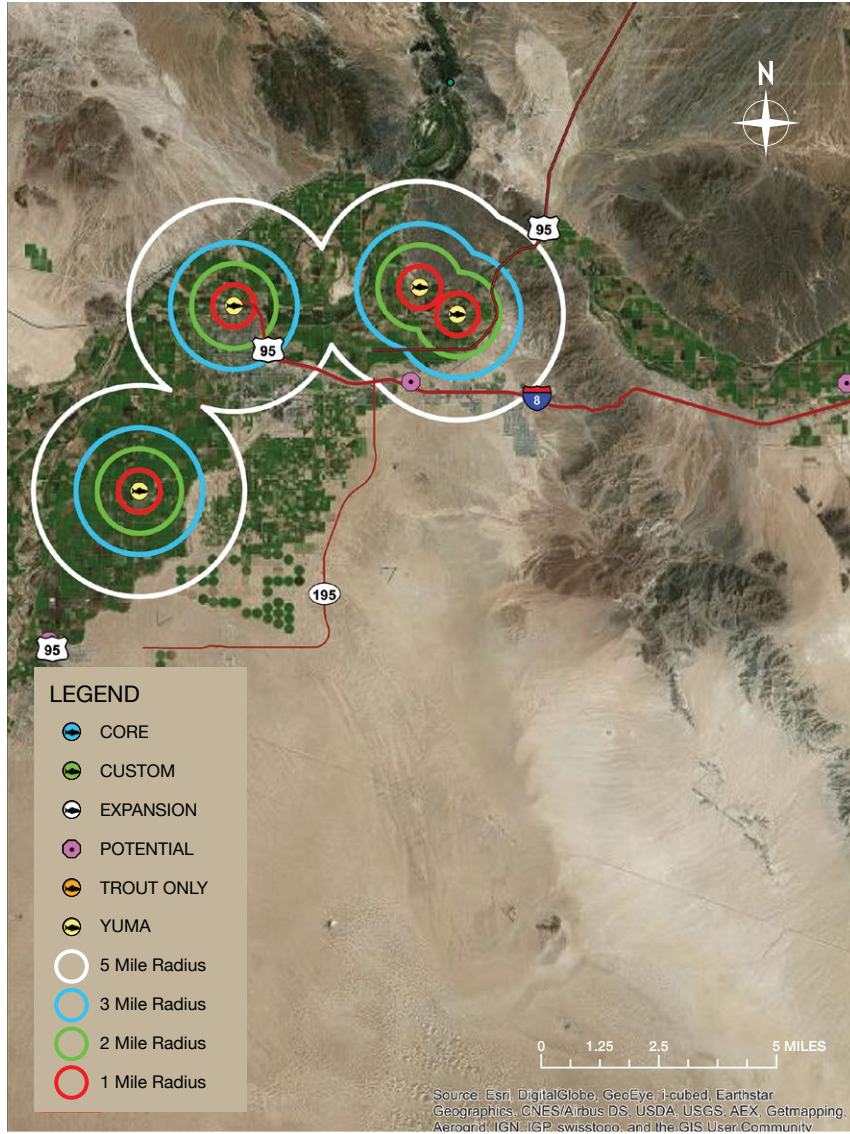


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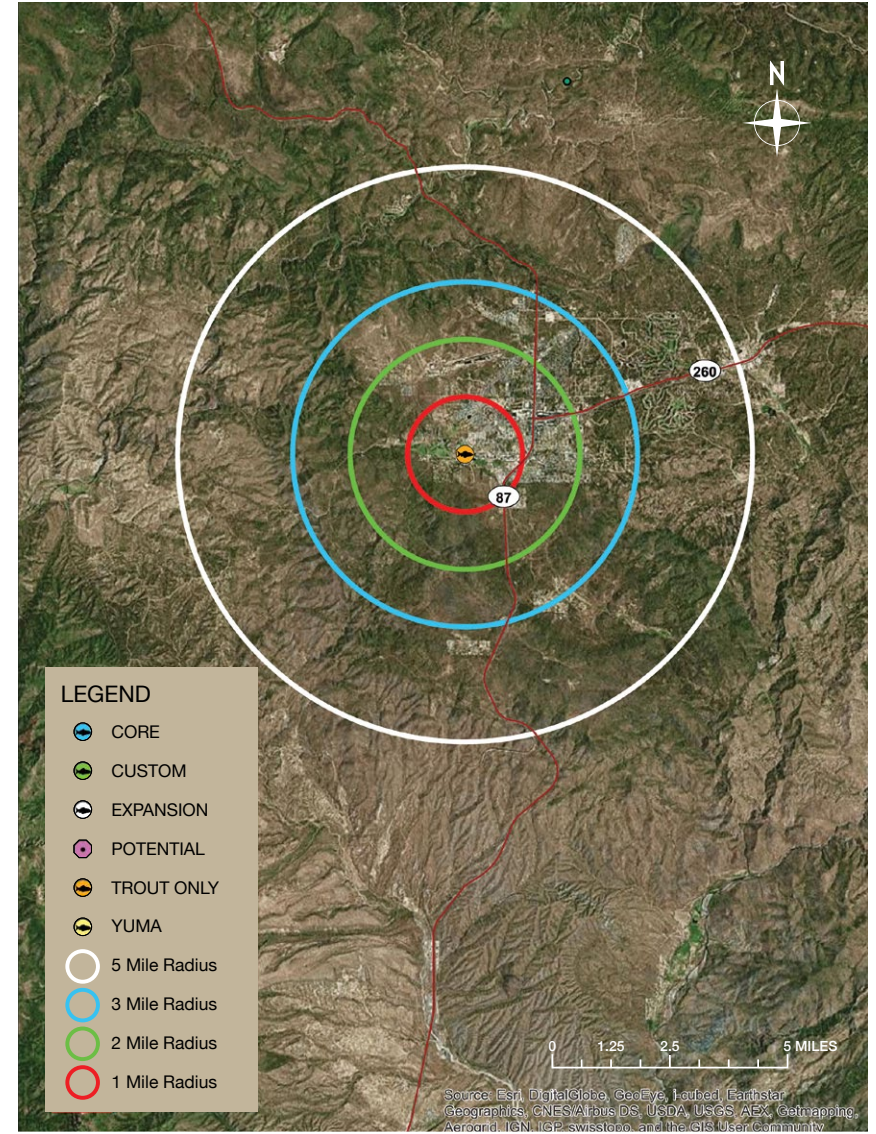


TUCSON





YUMA



PAYSON



## OBJECTIVE

## 2

**Achieve an angler satisfaction rate of at least 85% for each individual CFP water, and overall catch-rates greater than 0.50 fish/hr.**

Based on the last program-wide creel survey in 2010 (7,027 surveys), the program received a median score of eight (on a 1-10 scale) and 88% of anglers reported a satisfactory score of six or higher. Overall percent satisfaction varied from a low of 78% at Alvord Lake to a high of 97% at Sahuarita Lake when comparing satisfaction across individual waters. In addition, eight of the 21 waters received less than 85% percent of anglers rating six or higher. Satisfaction by anglers is a relative term because satisfaction with their “fishing experience” may encompass factors other than just catch rates, but it may include things such as park amenities, park security, appearance and landscaping, litter and/or graffiti issues, etc.

## STRATEGIC APPROACHES:

- 1) Monitor angler catch-rates at minimum every five years to determine how many fish are returned to anglers.
- 2) Adjust stocking frequencies and loading rates in addition to harvest regulations to maintain or increase satisfaction ratings for each water. Constantly ask ourselves “Is this the best we can do?” with each water.
- 3) Implement a “feature species” fishery within at least one CFP water and evaluate the effectiveness through creel surveys and general interaction with anglers.
- 4) Maintain a commitment to 100% on-time delivery of fish;
  - a) Maintain good relations and frequent contact with vendors used by the communities to manage lakes/ponds so that we can relay vital information on water conditions as needed;
  - b) Ensure that any changes to the stocking schedule are communicated to anglers as soon as possible in the CFP Bulletin, Department’s website, Department E-News, and internet posted stocking schedules.
  - c) Post stocking information into the FINS database within 24 hours of each stocking.
- 5) Ensure that there shall be adequate supply of fish to stock CFP waters.
  - a) Investigate new potential sources of healthy fish in neighboring states, and costs.
  - b) Investigate contractual changes that would be required to add new backup fish vendors.
  - c) Work with AGFD Hatchery staff to meet a portion or all of the needs for catfish, bluegill, and bass through construction of a new warm water hatchery in AZ.
  - d) Seek new sources of free fish, such as bass and sunfish fry, and stock into CFP waters to augment limited natural reproduction.







## OBJECTIVE

## 3

**Manage through the integrity of our data.**

The Community Fishing Program has conducted intensive creel surveys of anglers in 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2010. Another program-wide creel is already underway in 2015. Our best source of information comes directly from anglers as opposed to fish population surveys. It is vital to collect statistically valid data samples to determine angler use and satisfaction for each CFP water, which can then be used to adjust management strategies.

**STRATEGIC APPROACHES:**

- 1) Implement regular angler creel surveys;
  - a) Design and implement robust creel surveys every 5 years or more frequently as needed;
  - b) Hire & supervise necessary creel clerks during implementation of creel surveys;
  - c) Use current data to evaluate angler satisfaction and catch rates;
- 2) Utilize data to drive stocking numbers, timing/frequency, and number of stockings.
  - a) Adjust stockings as needed to achieve desired catch rates and angler satisfaction levels;
  - b) Adjust bag limits as needed for each water;
- 3) When feasible or as necessary, survey individual CFP fish populations.
  - a) Evaluate feature species for all CFP waters;
  - b) Assess predator impacts such as cormorants as required for permitting;









## OBJECTIVE

## 4

**Increase Community Pride in Community Fishing Waters.**

This objective is designed to increase Community pride by emphasizing shared ownership, responsibility, and value amongst a diverse group of partners and community leaders. Outreach and education are essential components of promoting the program within communities, and assisting the Department with recruitment of new anglers into fishing. This will be done in close cooperation with the Sportfish Education Program as well as constituent and partner groups within the communities. This will entail close coordination with park staff to ensure that communities (and community leaders) know about the CFP and local fishing opportunities, and to engage and promote attendance of community leaders.

**STRATEGIC APPROACHES:**

- 1) Build new constituencies with non-traditional customers and groups;
  - a) Park- and/or neighborhood-affiliated groups that frequent the parks and have vested interests;
- 2) Ensure that Department Legislative and Community Relations staff are aware of CFP expansion and into which legislative districts and communities;
  - a) Ensure that community leaders are invited to events that take place on CFP waters.
- 3) Work with Sportfish Education, commercial vendors/sponsors, and angling clubs to extensively promote fishing events and activities at CFP waters.
  - a) Promote use of CFP waters by retailer-sponsored events.
- 4) Ensure semi-weekly publication and posting of the Community Fishing Bulletin and up-to-date stocking calendars on the Department's website and E-news distribution lists.
- 5) Visit the license dealers, community partners, and other retailers quarterly;
  - a) Ensure sufficient CFP Guidebook inventory to partners;
  - b) Ensure CFP Guidebooks and stocking schedules are always available to customers
- 6) Investigate the potential for installing informational kiosks at major sporting goods suppliers such as Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, and Sportsman's Warehouse.
- 7) Work with communities to sell fishing/hunting licenses at municipal sites within participating communities.
- 8) Maintain the Department's CFP website on a regular basis;
- 9) Update the "Fish & Boat Arizona" web page for CFP waters on a regular basis;
- 10) Work closely with Sportfish Education Program to use CFP waters in their efforts to conduct Fishing Clinics and improve Sportfish education recruitment and retention efforts;







## OBJECTIVE

## 5

**Target a customer base (communities) that encompasses non-traditional angling customers.**

Based on numerous creel surveys, it has been well-documented that angler demographics in the CFP mirror the communities within a 5-mile radius in which the waters are located. Potential new communities/waters should be evaluated to ensure that we prioritize efforts into communities that have significant populations of non-traditional anglers.

## STRATEGIC APPROACHES:

- 1) CFP angler demographics should mirror demographics of the communities that they serve.
  - a) Use products and services that meet those customers' needs;
  - b) Target communities that increase a diverse customer base through expansion;
  - c) Investigate the use of strategic marketing strategies to reach minority groups to promote CFP waters and engagement with the communities;
  - d) Investigate potential grants to increase participation of minorities in fishing.
- 2) Work in tandem with Community Parks and Recreation departments on outreach strategies and efforts to promote the parks and fishing opportunities.
- 3) Increase interaction with angler constituency groups in the metro areas (Desert Flycasters, Arizona Flycasters, Trout Unlimited, Old Pueblo TU, etc.).
  - a) Utilize angler constituent groups to help promote CFP waters for families and children;
  - b) Attend as many angler club meetings as possible to stay engaged with clubs;
  - c) Disperse CFP information and guidebooks to the groups as frequently as possible;
  - d) Facilitate angler clubs use of CFP waters to conduct outings & recruitment efforts, particularly for families with children.
- 4) Work in close coordination with Sportfish Education Program
  - a) Ensure that family and youth fishing events are aligned as closely as possible with stocking events;
- 5) Explore the potential to work with juvenile detention/corrections and/or rehab programs use CFP waters as part of their rehabilitation efforts for troubled youth. This would be much like how the Wounded Warriors program use fishing at Silver Creek as part of therapeutic efforts for veterans;
  - a) Highlight the potential opportunities for youth and youth programs to use CFP waters to keep kids out of trouble.







## OBJECTIVE

## 6

**Implement sound business practices to help support CFP growth and angler recruitment efforts while minimizing costs.**

The CFP was designed to be a user pay – user benefit model, and partnerships with municipalities combined with Urban Fishing License revenue allowed the program to become self-sustaining. With increasing expansion however, this model should be modified to accommodate communities that lack resources to contribute funds as partners. Appropriate business practices will be employed to ensure the CFP can expand and continue to provide the products we’ve provided historically.

## STRATEGIC APPROACHES:

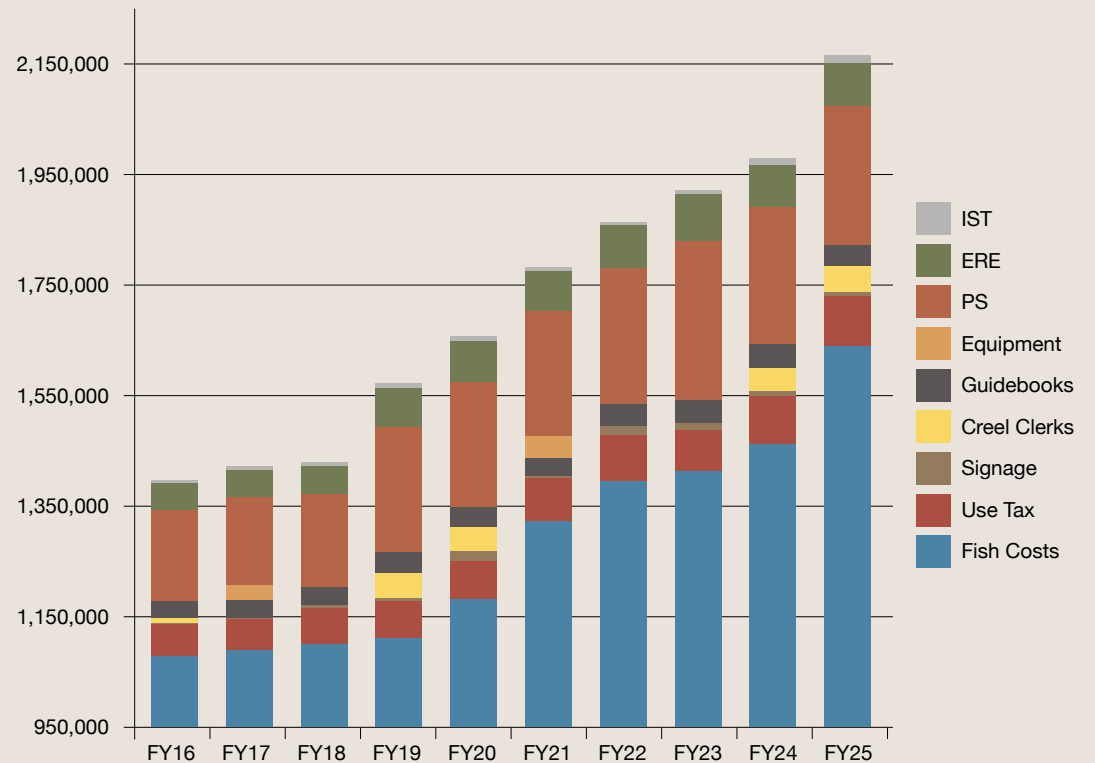
- 1) Maintain a minimum of 20% program funding through partnership agreements;
- 2) Seek corporate donations and available grants to increase participation of minority groups;
- 3) Tie into new sources of revenue/income through various Wildlife Lines-of-Business;
  - a) Explore new sources of program income such as diversification of services in the CFP;
    - i) Investigate potential to provide additional fee-based services such as lake/pond management (water, algae, and aquatic vegetation), monitoring and control of aquatic invasives, wildlife education, responses to injured wildlife, nuisance waterfowl control, etc.
  - b) Explore the potential to develop and promote a dedicated donation account for CFP;
    - i) Actively seek donations from various sources to establish a shared-fund.
  - c) Work with Attorney General and Department leadership to determine legal issues of seeking funds from private or commercial donors for use in expanding CFP;
    - i) Develop agreements to establish a fund that commercial/retail businesses can contribute for expansion into communities that don’t have adequate financial resources.



- 4) Use a cost-per-acre based budgeting framework for funding requests.
  - a) Index projected costs to inflation as well as market fluctuations;
  - b) Specific line-item requests shall be detailed each year to ensure base funding is not over-inflated. This ensures that if operational costs decrease that baseline requests should decrease as well.
  - c) Budget for annual program revenue from partnerships to account for minimal (<\$15k) carry-forward across fiscal years.
    - i) Use available carry-forward funds and/or donations to add waters into non-contributing community partners.
- 5) Implement "Lean" business practices, eliminating waste through continuous improvement.
  - a) Require out-of-state vendors to include the cost or proportion of the invoice that shipping comprises. This will reduce the Use Tax that we pay to Arizona Department of Revenue.
- 6) Encourage fish brokers to implement guaranteed price contracts for 5-year increments with fish suppliers.
  - a) Contracts with brokers should be used as leverage to the extent possible to stabilize the fish supplier market.

Number of stockings, estimated costs for fish and signage, and partnership costs for Community Fishing Program Waters.

	STOCKINGS PER YEAR					ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP COSTS	
Managed as:	Catfish	Trout	Sunfish	Annual Fish Cost per Acre FY15-16	1-time Signage	City	AGFD
Core Water	11	9	1	\$ 5,100	\$ 3,600	\$ 1,015	\$ 7,485
Expansion Water	3	2	1	\$ 1,600	\$ 3,600	\$ 410	\$ 4,690





## OBJECTIVE

## 7

**Increase law enforcement to a minimum of 1,400 hours of patrol on CFP waters to improve compliance and reduce violations;**

Like most agencies tasked with enforcing laws and rules, there is simply not enough officers available to routinely patrol CFP waters. As a result, compliance is perceived to be poorly enforced by many anglers. Enforcement of rules and regulations ensures that anglers are licensed and violations are minimized. Based upon close coordination with Law Enforcement Branch, several strategies were identified in the list below.

## STRATEGIC APPROACHES:

- 1) Seek to establish a full-time law enforcement (LE) position dedicated to CFP and Aquatic Invasive Species program.
  - a) Conduct a minimum of 1,400 hours of enforcement patrols on CFP waters annually;
  - b) Conduct focused patrols around stocking events;
  - c) Be able to provide a rapid in-person officer response to Operation Game Thief (OGT) calls;
- 2) Use existing LE resources efficiently by focusing LE stings and covert operations around stocking events and on CFP waters that are believed to have problems with angler compliance;
  - a) Use available OGT data to focus patrol efforts.
- 3) Use CFP waters to train new officers and recruits. Training officers within a diverse and challenging urban environment will provide extremely valuable staff training for new Wildlife Managers (Commissioned Officers);
- 4) Utilize non-LE staff (with commissioned status) to patrol CFP waters as per CFP recommendations.
  - a) Use available quarterly officers with Wildlife Management Division or other divisions to fulfill their monthly patrolling requirements.
- 5) Utilize the Reserve Officer pool to patrol CFP waters and participate in sting operations.
- 6) Develop agreements with other enforcement agencies to increase LE presence at CFP waters.
  - a) Use external LE support from City or County Officers (i.e., Maricopa County Sherriff's Posse);





- 7) Ensure that all CFP stocking dates continue to be sent to all affected LE staff so they can target patrols surround stocking events when most of the reported fishing violations occur;
- 8) Establish a fund for an informant pool so that LE staff can develop relationships with new informants and provide incentives to assist law enforcement;
- 9) Work with cities park staff to cite CFP violations into Municipal Courts.
  - a) Municipalities may be more inclined to cooperate in LE efforts if they know municipal judges will hear the cases, and associated fines are collected by municipal courts.





## OBJECTIVE

# 8

### Improve fish habitat and reduce stressors within CFP waters.

Though the traditional CFP waters rely heavily on stocked trout and channel catfish, improved natural and artificial habitats may reduce dependence upon stocked fish, particularly for bluegill and largemouth bass. Improved and revived fish habitat in CFP waters could also make featured species waters and seasons for featured species more viable.

#### STRATEGIC APPROACHES:

- 1) Work closely with Aquatic Habitat Program to evaluate and improve aquatic habitats in CFP waters;
- 2) Work with municipal partners and angling clubs to install cost-effective and functional fish habitats in CFP waters;
- 3) Examine the potential to stock largemouth bass at a fry size to determine if it helps recruitment.
- 4) Work with cities more closely to determine root causes of water quality problems instead of repeating costly treatments.
- 5) Implement management practices to reduce water bird fish predation (e.g. cormorants).



















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